

# ASHEVILLE COMMUNITY PROFILE

## **Community Description**

The City of Asheville, with a population of 69,726, comprises an area of approximately 42 square miles in Western North Carolina. Asheville is the regional center for manufacturing, transportation, health care, banking, professional services, and shopping. The City is the county seat of Buncombe County, the largest city in Western North Carolina, and the tenth largest city in the State. Asheville is nestled between the Blue Ridge and Great Smoky Mountains and located astride the French Broad and Swannanoa Rivers. The City is surrounded by lush mountains, many with elevations above 5,000 feet.

Recreational opportunities abound in the Asheville area with approximately 16% of the region's area designated as public or recreational. The Biltmore Estate, George Vanderbilt's 19<sup>th</sup> century estate comprises over 8,000 acres just outside the city limits. The Blue Ridge Parkway is also headquartered in Asheville. The City also has a strong historic preservation program. This assistance in the preservation of downtown housing and historic structures has created a truly unique and vibrant urban atmosphere in downtown Asheville.

Asheville's natural and architectural beauty, moderate climate, strong job market, and outstanding educational and health care facilities make it one of the most attractive locations in the United States. Asheville is consistently ranked high among the best places to live, work and retire. The City's long-range planning is directed toward preserving this area's high quality of life, so that it shall remain one of the "best places."

## **Form of City Government**

The City of Asheville, which was incorporated in 1883, operates under a Council/Manager form of government. The six-member City Council and the Mayor are elected at-large for staggered terms of four years. City Council, which acts as the City's legislative and policy-making body, selects the City Manager, who is the City's chief administrator and is responsible for implementing the policies and programs adopted by the City Council. The City's 1,000-person workforce provides basic City services including fire and police protection, planning and economic development, public works (streets, traffic, solid waste and stormwater services), parks and recreation, and water.

## **Statistical Information**

### **Year Established**

Asheville	1883
Buncombe County	1792

### **Size (square miles)**

Asheville	42.26
Buncombe County	657

### **Climate**

Avg. Yearly Temp.	55.4 F
Avg. Yearly Rainfall	46.97 in
Avg. Yearly Snowfall	14.9 in
Avg. Elevation	2,165 ft

### **Police Protection**

Number of Stations	2
Number of Police Personnel	221
Number of Patrol Districts	5
Number of:	
Calls for Service	109,953
UCR Part I Crimes Reported	4,903
UCR Part I Crimes Cases Cleared	1,104
Traffic Accidents Investigated	2,278

### **Utilities**

Miles of Streets	377.63
Number of Street Lights	9,854
Number of Traffic Lights	218
Miles of Water Mains	1,550
Treatment Plants	3
Water Service Connections	45,333
Fire Hydrants	6,000
Daily Avg. Consumption of Water (gal)	21.5 million
Max. Daily Capacity of Treat. Plants (gal)	41 million

### **Fire Protection**

Number of Stations	9
Number of Fire Personnel	199
Number of Calls Answered	11,163
Number of Inspections Conducted	3,159

### **Culture & Recreation**

Community Centers	11
Parks & Playgrounds	44
Park Acreage	727
Swimming Pools	2
Tennis Courts	22

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## Demographic Information

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000; Geographic Area: City of Asheville, unless otherwise indicated)

### Population (State Est. as of 7/01)

Asheville	69,726
Buncombe County	208,592
Asheville Metropolitan Area	225,965

### Population Growth 1990-2000

Asheville	11.4%
Buncombe County	18.1%
Asheville Metropolitan Area	17.8%

<u>Age</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Under 5 years	3,699	5.4%
5-9	3,789	5.5%
10-14	3,761	5.5%
15-19	4,080	5.9%
20-24	5,283	7.7%
25-34	9,869	14.3%
35-44	9,895	14.4%
45-54	9,653	14.0%
55-59	3,365	4.9%
60-64	2,898	4.2%
65-74	5,894	8.6%
75-84	4,958	7.2%
85+ years	1,745	2.5%
Median Age	39.2	

<u>Race</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
White	53,701	78.0%
Black or African American	12,129	17.6%
Other	3,059	4.4%
Hispanic or Latino (any race)	2,589	3.8%

<u>Households</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Total	30,690	
Family Households	16,737	54.5%
Non-Family Households	13,953	45.5%
Average Household Size	2.14	
Average Family Size	2.81	

<u>Housing Occupancy</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Total Housing Units	33,567	
Occupied Housing Units	30,690	91.4%
Vacant Housing Units	2,877	8.6%
Homeowner Vacancy Rate	2.6%	
Rental Vacancy Rate	8.1%	

<u>Housing Tenure</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Occupied Housing Units	30,690	
Owner-Occupied Housing Units	17,428	56.8%
Renter-Occupied Housing Units	13,262	43.2%

<u>Sex</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Male	32,207	46.8%
Female	36,682	53.2%

## Other Demographic Information

(Source: Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce)

### Public Schools

Number of Elementary Schools	6
Number of Middle/High Schools	2/1
Total Student Enrollment	4,027

### Medical

Hospitals/Beds	3/1,233
Doctors	637
Dentists	108

### Area Colleges & Universities

	<u>Enrollment</u>
University of North Carolina-Asheville	3,261
Western Carolina University	6,455
Mars Hill College	957
Warren Wilson College	782
Montreat College	441
Asheville-Bunc. Tech/Comm College	5,311

### Housing

Avg. Price of Area Homes Sold (Apr 03)	\$187,590
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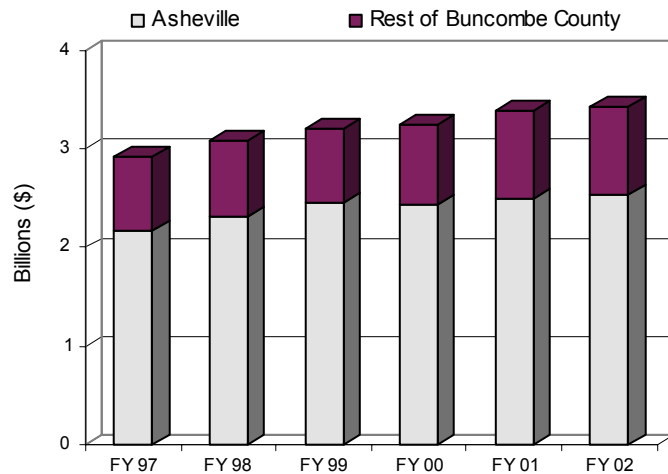
## Economic Indicators

Growth in many of the City's revenues depends on the state of the economy. When the economy is expanding, revenues are up, and when the economy slows, revenues react accordingly. Given this relationship, key economic indicators, such as retail sales, unemployment rates, job growth, construction starts and hotel/motel sales are helpful in assessing why revenues are either up or down, and how they might be trending in the future. Although the City's revenues are most directly impacted by the local economy, trends in North Carolina and across the nation are also important.

### Retail Sales (Source: N.C. Department of Revenue)

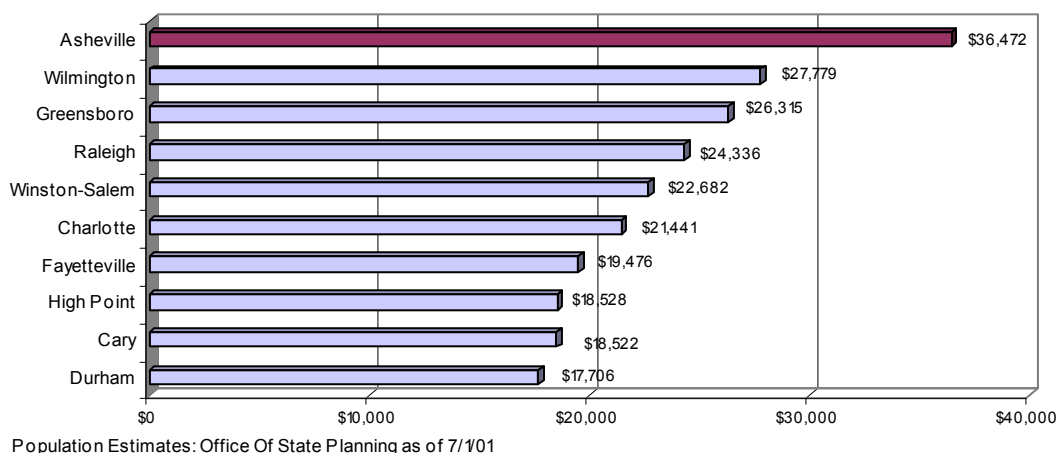
#### Buncombe County Retail Sales

		<u>% Growth</u>
FY 91-92	\$ 1,879,980,359	
FY 92-93	2,045,050,037	8.78%
FY 93-94	2,322,972,171	13.59%
FY 94-95	2,562,218,695	10.30%
FY 95-96	2,760,468,147	7.74%
FY 96-97	2,914,171,587	5.57%
FY 97-98	3,081,052,389	5.73%
FY 98-99	3,211,541,498	4.24%
FY 99-00	3,244,933,551	1.04%
FY 00-01	3,385,178,057	4.32%
FY 01-02	3,431,308,897	1.36%



In addition to being an important indicator of overall local economic health, Buncombe County retail sales activity also directly impacts the City's general fund budget through the one-cent sales tax. Between FY 1995-96 and FY 2000-01, retail sales countywide grew at an average annual rate of 4.18%. However, the current economic recession has led to a slow down in retail sales activity. FY 2001-02 retail sales increased by only 1.4% compared to the prior year. Retail sales are expected to rebound somewhat in the coming year, but remain below the levels experienced prior to the recession.

#### Per Capita Retail Sales for North Carolina's Ten Largest Cities FY 2001-02

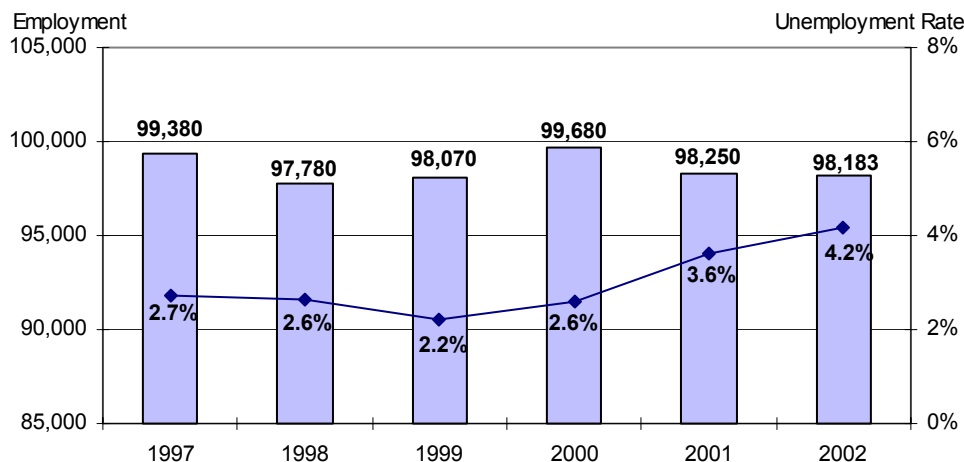


Of the \$3.43 billion in retail sales recorded in Buncombe County during FY 2001-02, \$2.54 billion or 74% of those sales occurred within the City of Asheville. Among the ten largest cities in North Carolina, Asheville had the highest level of retail sales per resident in FY 2001-02. This data reflects Asheville's position as the regional economic center for Western North Carolina. Asheville's high level of retail sales per resident is also likely associated with Asheville's status as a tourist destination.

## ASHEVILLE COMMUNITY PROFILE

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## **Labor Market Trends** (Sources: N.C. Employment Security Commission & the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce)



### **Buncombe County Workforce (2001)**

<b><u>Largest Employment Sectors (NAICS)</u></b>	<b><u>% of Employment</u></b>
Health Care & Social Assistance	16.5%
Manufacturing	14.6%
Retail Trade	13.6%
Accommodation & Food Services	10.0%
Educational Services	6.4%
Construction	6.4%
Public Administration	5.2%
Administrative & Waste Services	4.7%
Transportation & Warehousing	4.4%

### **Employment Growth**

<b><u>Year</u></b>	<b><u>Avg. Employment</u></b>	<b><u>% Change</u></b>
1993	92,410	2.51%
1994	93,180	0.83%
1995	92,340	-0.90%
1996	96,680	4.70%
1997	99,380	2.79%
1998	97,780	-1.61%
1999	98,070	0.30%
2000	99,680	1.64%
2001	98,250	-1.43%
2002	98,183	-0.07%

The unemployment rate is a critical indicator of relative strength in the local economy. Due to the continuing economic slowdown, Buncombe County has experienced higher unemployment rates over the last two years than it did during the late 1990's. As of January 2003, the county's unemployment rate stood at 4.5%. Local unemployment rates, however, are below both the statewide (6.0%) and national (5.7%) unemployment rates. In fact, Asheville has the lowest unemployment rate among North Carolina's eleven Metropolitan Statistical Areas.

Between 1993 and 2002, the total employment in Buncombe County increased by 5,773 jobs or 6.2%. The County's leading industry in terms of employment is health care & social assistance, which employed 17,367 people in 2001. Other leading industry sectors include manufacturing, retail trade and accommodation & food services. Together these four sectors accounted for approximately 55% of all Buncombe County jobs in 2001. Despite the fact that it remains the second largest industry sector in Buncombe County, the manufacturing sector has experienced a significant decline in recent years. Between 1995 and 2002 manufacturing employment in the Asheville area decreased by approximately 3,700 jobs or 18.5%. Meanwhile, much of the employment growth in the area has come in the service sector, with health care and business services accounting for most of the increase.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, the average annual wage per job in Buncombe County in 2001 was \$28,363. Buncombe County's average annual wage per job is below both the state (\$31,430) and national (\$35,550) averages. The County's 2001 average wage per job is 90.2% of the state average and 79.8% of the national average; both percentages are up slightly from the prior year. Approximately 38.4% of Buncombe County jobs pay higher wages than the state average.

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## **Labor Market Trends** (Sources: Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce & N.C. Department of Commerce)

### **Buncombe Co. Major Manufacturers**

<b>Employer</b>	<b>Employment</b>
Sonopress, Inc.	1,085
Pillowtex Corp./Beacon	975
Schneider Electric/Square D	697
Cutler-Hammer	582
Charles D. Owen Mfg. Co.	575

### **Major Employers – Non Manufacturing**

<b>Employer</b>	<b>Employment</b>
Mission/St. Joseph's Health System	5,125
Buncombe County Bd. Of Education	3,650
Buncombe County Government	1,425
Community Care Partners	1,200
VA Hospital	991

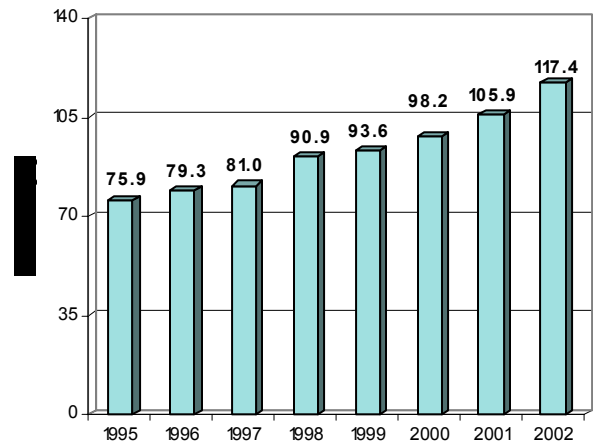
## **ACCRA Cost of Living Index (4th Quarter 2002)**

<b>Cities</b>	<b>All Items</b>	<b>Food</b>	<b>Housing</b>
Raleigh	101.0	108.0	96.9
<b>Asheville</b>	<b>96.7</b>	<b>96.9</b>	<b>98.1</b>
Charlotte	95.7	94.9	88.5
Greenville, SC	94.7	96.7	78.3
Winston-Salem	91.7	94.7	85.9
Knoxville, TN	89.1	95.4	78.3

(100 = The Composite National Average)

## **Buncombe County Hotel/Motel Sales** (Sources: N.C. Department of Commerce & the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce)

	<b><u>Hotel/Motel Sales</u></b>	<b><u>% Change</u></b>
1995	\$ 75,935,523	
1996	79,295,931	4.4%
1997	80,994,128	2.1%
1998	90,915,449	12.3%
1999	93,599,204	3.0%
2000	98,176,768	4.9%
2001	105,942,408	7.9%
2002	117,411,941	10.8%



Asheville's setting in the heart of a vast and beautiful recreational area has made tourism an important part of the local economy. The most recent data from the N.C. Department of Commerce indicate that tourism in Buncombe County generated an economic impact of \$461.07 million in 2001, an increase of 1.4% compared to 2000. Buncombe County ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in travel impact among the state's 100 counties. Over 8,410 jobs in Buncombe County are directly linked to travel and tourism. Growth in hotel/motel sales is a good indicator of the status of the local tourist economy. The local tourist economy showed continued strength in 2002, with hotel/motel sales increasing 10.8% compared to 2001. Hotel/motel sales through the first four months of 2003, however, are down 6.4% compared to 2002.

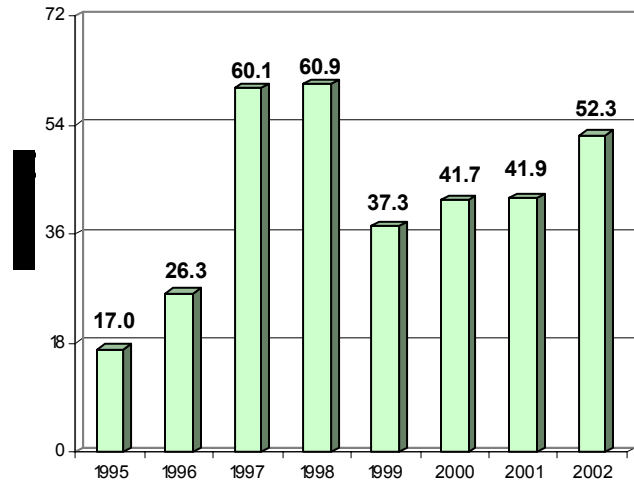
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## **Construction Trends** (Source: City of Asheville Building Safety Department)

### **Residential Permit Valuation**

#### **Residential Permit Valuation**

		<b><u>% Change</u></b>
1995	\$17,039,247	
1996	26,296,518	54.33%
1997	60,098,469	128.54%
1998	60,867,405	1.28%
1999	37,271,779	-38.77%
2000	41,708,329	11.90%
2001	41,897,612	0.45%
2002	52,343,315	24.93%

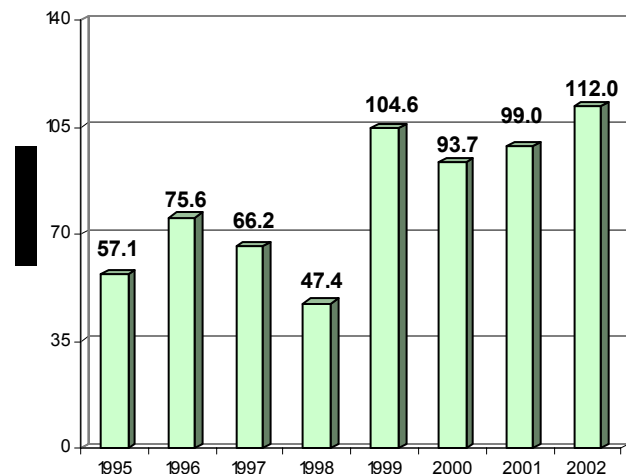


Residential property is the single largest component of the City's tax base comprising 43.6% of the City's total assessed valuation. Trends in residential construction are therefore an important indicator of overall growth in the City's financial capacity. In addition, residential development generally costs more to service than other types of development. Explosive growth in residential construction can thus lead to more demand for services and higher operating costs for City departments. After two years in which residential permit valuation exceeded \$60 million, growth in the residential sector slowed to more modest levels between 1999 and 2001. Despite the economic recession, residential construction increased sharply in 2002, growing by 24.9% over the prior year.

### **Commercial Permit Valuation**

#### **Commercial Permit Valuation**

		<b><u>% Change</u></b>
1995	\$57,066,104	
1996	75,649,141	32.56%
1997	66,204,451	-12.48%
1998	47,432,064	-28.36%
1999	104,611,542	120.55%
2000	93,723,352	-10.41%
2001	98,982,460	5.61%
2002	111,985,132	13.14%



Commercial property is the second largest component of the City's tax base comprising 30.7% of the City's total assessed valuation. Growth in commercial construction is important for the City's financial capacity and for the overall health of the local economy. Commercial construction activity increased substantially in 1999 and remained strong in 2000 and 2001. Major commercial construction projects completed during this time included the Asheville Mall expansion and the additions at the Grove Park Inn. Despite the recession, commercial construction activity also increased in 2002. Several large projects commenced during 2002, including the construction of a new \$4.6 million Target department store in east Asheville.